

Project I.D. No 178

NAME: Mihara, Genji DATE OF BIRTH: 1890 PLACE OF BIRTH: Shimane-ke
Age: 87 Sex: M Marital Status: W Education: 4 yrs. high school

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1907 Age: 17 M.S. S Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Schoolboy 2. Art & curios shop 3. Restaurant
Place of residence: 1. Seattle 2. 3.
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Community organizations/activities: President of Japanese Association

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: _____
Name of relocation center: Interned in Santa Fe
Dispensation of property: _____ Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Ration breakdown 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Minidoka Idaho (united with family)

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: Sept. '45
Address/es: 1. Seattle 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Activities: 1. 2. 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: Wife died in '59

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 10/7/77 Place: Seattle

Translator: Nicel Hall

T: To begin with, will you please tell me your name.

M: It is Genji Mihara.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Shimane Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in 1890.

Q: What kind of thing do you remember about your childhood?

A: In the country where I lived it was young men's dream to go to big cities such as Fukuoka, Kobe, Osaka and Tokyo after graduating from highschools. My cousin and I thought about going to Tokyo or to America after graduating from highschool. That is how I came to America.

Q: What was your father doing?

A: He was in clothing business.

Q: What kind of a woman was your mother?

A: My mother was a devout Buddhist and a housewife. She had three children.

Q: Were you the oldest?

A: Yes, I was. I had two younger sisters.

Q: Were you the only son?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Was your father a strict man?

A: Yes, he was, and my mother was a gentle woman.

Q: Do you remember being scolded by your father?

A: I remember being scolded once for not doing something important
that he told me to do.

Q: What was it?

A: I did not take a letter my father told me to deliver. I had put
it in my pocket and forgot about it while playing. My father was
waiting for an ^wanser. I remember getting scolded.

Q: Did you help the store?

A: No, I didn't. I might have helped the store if I graduated from
school.

Q: Didn't you help the store after school?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: How much schooling did you have?

A: I went 4 years in highscool.

Q: How many years did you go in grammar school?

A: Eight years.

Q: What did you want to be?

A: I didn't have a definite idea what I wanted to be.

Q: Did you like school?

A: Yes, I did. I was an average student.

Q: What subject did you like best?

A: For sports I was in boating. Later I played baseball and kendo (Japanese fencing).

Q: Did you have any other hobby?

A: I didn't have anything special except reading^{books} and writing Japanese poems. In 1933 my poem was selected in the New Year poetry party and I was granted an audience with the Emperor. Since my wife died I have been busy, so I have not been writing poems.

Q: What year were you born?

A: I was born in 1890.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am 87 years old now. I am going to make a speech at the centennial banquet of Christianity. I became a Christian when I came to America, so I have been a Christian for 70 years.

Q: Did you come here when you were 17 years old?

A: Yes. I was 18 in Japanese way of counting, but 17 in Western way.

T: I am surprised your father let you come to America?

M: My cousin who was 20 years old said, "Let's go to America together" so I came here. I was planning on going back to Japan, but I got married and had children, so I could not go back to Japan. My sister took a husband and inherited the family.

did you think

Q: What kind of a country America was when you were 17?

A: I thought America was better than Japan in everything, so I wanted to go and see it. It was from my curiosity that I came to America. I had a dream.

Q: Did you hear much about America?

A: I read about America in books and magazines. In those days there was a magazine called "Jitsugyo No Nihon" (Industrial Japan) which was published monthly. It wrote good things and hardly any bad thing about America. It said San Francisco does not like Japanese, but Seattle is all right. One pastor said that San Francisco was punished by the earthquake because it oppressed Japanese. That is why I decided not to go to San Francisco, and came to Seattle by ship.

Q: Did your father let you come here without any argument?

A: At first he told me not to go, but as I told him that I was coming back he let me go.

Q: Where did the ship set sail from?

A: From Yokohama. It took 16 days to sail from Yokohama to Seattle.

Q: Do you remember about your voyage?

A: I did not get seasick, but my cousin got seasick and didn't eat much. It didn't bother me, but it was long 16 days.

Q: Were the passengers all men in those days?

A: Of course. For many years after I came here there were just men. As I joined the church, I went to the street corner with old church members and invited young men to church. I did that for about 5 years.

Q: Weren't there any women on board the ship?

A: No, women were not coming here in those days.

Q: What do you remember about your voyage?

A: I don't remember much, but when we crossed the dateline the ship's crew entertained us by singing and dancing.

Q: Was it a Japanese ship?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Do you remember the name of the ship?

A: It was Shinano Maru.

Q: What year did you come here?

A: In 1907.

Q: Then it was the year after the great earthquake in San Francisco, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. That is why everybody came to Seattle instead of San Francisco. Even now people in Los Angeles say that they arrived in Seattle and then went there. San Francisco had bad reputation as Japanese children born in America were not allowed to go to public schools. That is why people say San Francisco was destroyed by the great earthquake.

Q: How did you feel when the ship entered the harbor of Seattle?

A: It arrived here at night time, and the harbor was beautiful with lights. In those days there were not many electric lights in Japan, so I thought America was beautiful. There were no cars on in those days, and people were riding carriages.

Q: How was the city of Seattle?

A: It had ~~many~~^{many} slopes, and streets were not too good. I remember them washing sands off of Jackson Street to level the street before they paved it.

Q: How did you feel when you had the first contact with the white people in Seattle?

A: I thought the white people were very kind. I met ~~with~~ the white people because I joined the church. I had to learn English, so I worked as a schoolboy. The ladies at the church taught us English very kindly. Sometimes they gave us coffee or tea and cookies. I never thought about such a thing in Japan. That is why many people came to church. They did not come to church because of the religion, but because they taught us English and treated us with kindness. As they were so kind we decided to attend the Sunday worship service.

Q: Did you become a schoolboy as soon as you came here.

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you receive inspections when you arrived here?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What did they check?

A: At first they gave us a physical examination. Then they asked us how much money we had, where we were going and what we were going to do. At that time Japanese pastors were interpreters, so they introduced me to the church.

Q: Didn't you get any unpleasant feeling at the Immigration office?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: What did you do the first day?

A: I stayed at a hotel named Taiho-Kan. The following day I went to the church.

Q: Was it a Japanese church?

A: Yes, it was. It is the Japanese Presbyterian Church which I belong to now. It had just started then. At that time it was not an independent church. It was a branch of the Seattle First Presbyterian Church.

Q: How did you find out about the church?

A: Rev. Fukumatsu Okazaki who was the founder of the Baptist Church was the interpreter at the Immigration Office. He asked me where I was going, so I told him that I had not decided yet. When I talked about Rev. Shimanuki in Japan, he told me that Rev. Shimanuki is a Presbyterian, so go to the Presbyterian church here and Rev. Inouye will take care of me. That is why I went there. I was lucky.

In those days Seattle was still a bad town, worse than the Chinatown here. It had gambling place, prostitute house and Japanese racketeers, but by Christian influence it was changed completely. That is why I have been a Christian leader for 40 years. There are Buddhist, Shinto, Konko-Kyo, Seicho-No-Ie and many other religious organizations here. Everybody know me as a Christian, but everyone in the Japanese community cooperates with me, so it is not difficult to get along. In some places they fight each other.

Q: Did you become a schoolboy in a white family?

A: Yes, I did. The family was very kind to me. On Sunday the master used to go out with a book. I was wondering why he went out with a book on Sunday which was his day off. I found out later that it was the Bible.

Q: Was he a teacher?

A: He was the principal of a grade school. His name was Mr. Stanton. When I went to school I was told that Mr. Stanton was an elder of the church. A few of my schoolmates decided to attend a worship service. I think God prepared me a way.

Q: Was there a Japanese church within that church?

A: No, there was a room for Japanese worship service.

Q: Did it have any relationship with the First Presbyterian Church?

A: No, it didn't. It was a branch of the First Presbyterian Church.

Q: That is why the elder knew about it, didn't he?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Who found the schoolboy's job for you?

A: The Japanese Presbyterian Church did. In those days there were just young people, so the church took care of them more than teaching the gospel. About 4 boys shared a small room. The church took care of finding places to live and jobs. The jobs were posted on the board in the church. Japanese boys had reputation as hard workers, so jobs were not hard to find.

Q: How long did you work as a schoolboy in that family?

A: About two years.

Q: Did you have fun?

A: Yes, because the Mrs. was a nice lady. In Japan they do not treat the people outside same as the member of the family. After working here for two years I found out that people treat us equally. I understood it after I became a Christian. They had a son^a little younger than I, but they treated me the same as they treated him. When she bought apples, she gave me apples just as she gave his son apples. It is not like that in Japan because of the family system. I gradually understood the good points of Christians.

Since then I joined the street-corner gospel mission every Sunday. Seattle is a cold place but I didn't miss it. We occupied the best corner as 20 to 30 young men gathered. In those days all the churches had morning and evening services. In the morning they held worship services, and in the evening they held the gospel meetings. We stood on the street corner from 6 o'clock in the evening.

Q: Did you hold the meeting on the street?

A: We held it on the street corner where many young men passed by. If the speaker was good, they would stop and listen, but if a poor speaker talked they went away. That is why the chairman left the good speaker till the end. In those days there was the Church Federation, so other churches joined us.

Q: What did you do in the street meeting?

A: We gave testimonies.

Q: Didn't you have any music?

A: There was a man who played an accordion, so they came to listen to him. They were all bachelors. There were no girls nor wives then. They came later. Sometimes there were hecklers, but we paid no attention to them. I think it was good that we held the meeting on the street corners for 5 years.

Q: Did you do that for 5 years?

A: Yes, every Sunday.

Q: About how many people came to church by it?

A: Quite a few people came as our church was closest to downtown.
In those days there were no cars, so we walked with them to church.

Q: After about 5 people gave testimonies did you take the people
to the church?

A: Yes, we did, when it was time. Quite a few people were baptized.

At one time a Japanese had a fight with a Black man and killed him with a knife. He was tried and was sentenced to die. Japanese people tried to help him, and asked the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Dr. Mathews, who asked for retrial saying that the death sentence was too severe. The retrial was held, and the judge sentenced him to 10 years. As Dr. Mathews was an influential man he asked the judge to change the sentence to one to 20 years. ^{A year} Later Dr. Mathews and Rev. Inouye went to the prison in Wala Wala and brought him back. This man, Arata Usaburo made testimony on the street corner, so many people gathered to hear him talk. That happened 65 years ago.

Q: Do you remember any other story like that?

A: There is another story. A man who was working as a dayworker in California gambled and lost money, so he stole his mistress's jewelry and pawned it to get money. She hired a detective, who told her that the Japanese man who worked in her house was suspicious. She became angry with him saying that the worker was a good man and would not do such a thing. She fired the detective. This man could not stay there. He spent all the money, so he quit the job and came to Seattle. He was going toward the railroad track to kill himself, when he heard the music by accordion and hymn and came to our meeting. Someone was making a testimony saying that a man should not kill himself. He came to our church and confessed that he stole the jewelry, but the misses was so good that he could not stay there. He asked Rev. Inouye what to do. Rev. Inouye told him that he should give himself up to the police. I was young then, so I argued with the pastor saying that he didn't have to go to the police if he confessed his crime. The pastor said that the man should not hide his crime. The man gave himself up to the police in Seattle, and was sent to California, where he was put in a jail. The man was spiritually tormented, but he became well after he went to jail. This is another story that came from the roadside mission.

Q: Do you think you might have been dragged into gambling and other bad things if you were not connected with the church?

A: Yes, because it was dangerous for ^a young man to be alone without his family. When I stood at the street corner I used to say, "There is a place north of the Rocky where the water divides. One which comes this way flows into the Pacific Ocean, but if it goes the other way it flows into the Mississippi. You are only in your twenties, so it does not hurt to come to the church. Just come and see." Many people joined the churches in Seattle. Not only the churches but the whole society became good.

I have put up a sign that I am a Christian. There is an election every year in the Nikkeijin Kai. I have served 6 years before the war and 29 years after the war, total of 35 years. There are 500 members in the Nikkeijin Kai. Among them are members of Tenrikyo, Seicho-No-Iye and Buddhists among them. Christians not only propagate its teaching but serve in the community. Members of the Tenrikyo church cut the lawn in front of the Nikkeijin Kai office every month.

Q: When did you start the Nikkeijin Kai?

A: In 1935. I served 6 years since then till the war broke out. After coming back from the camp I organized a relief association and sent goods to Japan for 7 years. It was after we came back from the camp and we didn't have much money but we sent \$20,000 to RAA.R.A. We asked women's associations of churches to collect old clothes, and sent 330 tons of clothes to Japan. After that I reorganized the Nikkeijin Kai.

Q: What does R.A.R.A. material mean?

A: Japan was in bad shape after the war. People did not have food to eat nor clothes to wear, so we collected old clothes and sent them to Japan. The U.S. government did not allow Nikkeijin Kai to send materials directly to Japan. We had to take them to the organization called RARA which in turn sent them to Japan. Some Japanese in Seattle complained that it looked like Americans sent the goods to Japan. I said, "Even if one person could wear a sweater, it does not matter if Japanese in Seattle sent it or not." In the meantime I received a letter of appreciation from Prince Takamatsu, president of Japan Red Cross. I told them, "See. You complained, but they knew who sent them." So they were all happy.

Q: What is R.A.R.A. abbreviation of?

A: I don't remember what it was, but they distributed goods especially to orphange and to poor people. American Friend Service Committee collected the material. We took the things we collected to them, and they sent them to Japan.

Q: What did you do after you worked as a schoolboy?

A: My father was a merchant in Japan, and he sent me some merchandise for me to sell here. In 1909 there was the Alaska Yukon Exposition in Seattle, so I opened a store in it. The business was pretty good, and they sold good. Then Christmas came, so I sold goods in downtown, and they sold good. I leased a store and

sold such merchandise as Japanese flower vase and boxes. The business was good only in December, but I had no business the rest of the time. In 2 years I was in debt. I was a Christian then, so I decided to work and pay back the debt. I became a waiter at a restaurant.

Q: Was it a white restaurant?

A: No, it was a Japanese restaurant. I worked and paid back all the debts. Then the restaurant business became slack, and my boss Mr. Osawa could not pay my wages for 3 years. Finally he told me that he could not pay me, so he would give me the restaurant. As I was young I agreed to take over the restaurant, and managed it till the war broke out in 1941. During that time I never missed the church, I attended the worship service and prayer meetings. I did not make much money, but I was elected as a leader of the Japanese community and served for 6 years.

Side 2 Q: Did you do well in restaurant business?

A: It went well at first. I had 4 sons, and I managed to bring them up.

Q: Did you send them to colleges?

A: The oldest son did not go to college because of the war. The second and the third son went to collegembut they didn't graduate because of illness.

Q: How was it during the Depression?

A: We had the hardest time then. My restaurant was for laborers, so it didn't go bankrupt. I just didn't make much money. In California restaurants can sell liquor, but in Washington we could not sell liquor. After World War I we could sell liquor in restaurants, but as I was a Christian I did not sell liquor. People told me that I would make money if I sold liquor, but I did not sell liquor as it would have bothered my conscience if I did. We did not sell liquor in my Occidental Cafe. I am still glad I didn't.

Q: Was it a Japanese restaurant or a Western style restaurant?

A: It was a Western style restaurant. It was called the Occidental Cafe.

Q: What kind of difficulties did you have in operating a restaurant?

A: I had worked only as a waiter, and I did not know how to cook. You do not succeed in restaurant business unless you know how to cook. I was given the restaurant for my wages. I was the chief waiter and cashier, so I left the kitchen to the cook. That is why I did not succeed in restaurant business, but I managed to make a living.

Q: Did you work as a waiter and hired the cook?

A: Yes, I hired the chief cook, fry cook, and dish washers.

Q: About how many people did you hire?

A: Six to ten people depending on how busy I was.

Q: Were they all Japanese?

A: Sometimes I had Filipinos as dishwashers, but waiters and cooks were all Japanese. I did not dream about managing a restaurant, but I had to, because the boss could not pay me.

Q: Was Seattle hit hard by the Depression?

A: After World War I Hoover Town was born. It was like a ghetto. People put up tents or built huts and lived in them.

Q: You did not have much hardships, didn't you?

A: In 1924 I was elected as the of 42 restaurants.

Q: Did that include the white restaurants?

A: No, just Japanese. There were 42 Japanese restaurants in Seattle. Since then I started working for the community. In 1925 I was elected the president of the Japanese Association, and since then I was reelected year after year.

Q: Was there Japanese Association before then?

A: Yes, it was organized in 1900. It was like the City Hall of the Japanese Community.

Q: What kind of work did it perform?

A: It did all kinds of work. There was the Commercial Department which took care of business, Also there were Educational Dept. Social Welfare Dept. and Cultural Dept. I think they call it the Nichi-Bei Kai here. In Tacoma, Portland and Seattle it is called the Nikkeijin Kai. It used to be called the Nihonjin Kai, but as the Niseis and Sanseis are not Japanese, we call them Nikkeijin (Japanese American).

Q: When did you take a wife?

A: I got married in 1913.

Q: Were you 26 years old?

A: I was 24 years old.

Q: How did you find your wife?

A: She was the pastor's second daughter. We used to go to night-school together. My father-in-law agreed to our marriage.

Q: Did you decide to marry by yourselves?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Was she a Nisei?

A: She was born in Japan, so she was Issei. In those days most men went back to Japan to take wives, but I got married here in the same church. Later there was the picture marriage.

Q: Not many people were married around 1913, weren't they?

A: Yes, only once in a while.

Q: How many years difference were there between you and your wife?

A: I think there were 4 years difference.

Q: In those days there were not many women, weren't there?

A: No, there weren't. Since around 1915 the number of women increased. Only a few people gambled, but most people worked and saved money. Then they went back to Japan to take wives or sent for them. They bought small hotels or restaurants. Except for a few gamblers, most people were good.

Q: Were there troubles because there were not many women?

A: Yes, there were once in a while, but nothing in the church.

There were fighting and killings among gamblers. The Federation of Churches in Seattle crusaded against gambling. The Nikkejin Kai made pamphlets, "Go To Sunday School" and distributed in the community. It worked as the Nikkejin Kai sponsored it instead of the church. The number of Sunday School children increased in Seattle by it. I have been a Christian leader for a long time. I am waiting for somebody to take my place.

Q: The relationship between the white people and Japanese was good in Seattle, wasn't it.

A; It was very good. Mr. William Denning who was a 4 time mayor of Seattle was the elder of the University Presbyterian Church. His successor Gordon Clinton who became mayor twice was the Sunday School teacher of the Methodist Church. The leaders were Christian and pro-Americans. I have been the vice-president of the Japan Society for 7 years. The American society treat Japanese kindly.

Q: Why is it that the relationship is so good compared to California?

A: Mr. Denning who served as the mayor of Seattle 4 times, and Mr. Denning, the two-time mayor praise Japanese as law-abiding race. There are hardly any criminals among Japanese. However, 60 to 70 years ago Japanese were bad. There were Chinese gambling houses side by side just like in Las Vegas, but they were all cleaned up. It was by the influence of the Christian mayors who treated Japanese well. That is why I am working.

Q: Let's talk about the time of the war? How did you feel when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A; I thought Japan did not have a chance. I was the president of the Japanese Association then. There were spies from Japan, majors and colonels. They said to me, "We have to attack America." I said to them, "But America is strong." "No, America is not strong," they replied. I said, "In olden days we fought with swords, spears and bows and arrows, but this is the age of

airplanes. Japan does not have oil in the first place." "We have plenty of oil stored," they said. "Where?" I asked. "In Tokuyama in Yamaguchi Prefecture," they replied. I said, "Go to Southern California or Texas and see the oil gushing out. We cannot fight with a country which has oil wells." "You do not have to tell me that," he said, "We will defeat America while our oil lasts, so don't worry". "That is what you think," I said, "They have oil and also they are intelligent. What do you do if you run out of oil. You will lose the war, don't you?" "That is why we want to win the war in its early stage" they replied. They made a sudden attack on Pearl Harbor, but as America had potential energy Japan lost when the war prolonged.

Q: What were you doing at the time of Pearl Harbor attack?

A: I was holding a committee meeting. I said that such a thing happened because of that fool Tojo who did not know America. Tojo had never seen America. Japanese Navy officers knew about the world, but Army officers did not know anything. It was a mistake that such men became ministers.

That evening I was arrested and was taken to the jail in Seattle. From there I was taken to Montana and then to Roseberg near Mexico, and then to Santa Fe. The session of the First Presbyterian Church in Seattle sent a letter to the Justice Department asking them why they arrested me. The reply came from the Justice Department, so they sent me a copy of the

letter. According to the letter I did not do anything wrong, but I was the most active leader of the Japanese community in the Northwest. Also I was potentially dangerous, so they wanted to detain me for a while. Because of the letter I was released earlier than other people. I was paroled in 2 years. When I sent to Santa Fe, some people complained that I, who was the president of the Japanese Association should not be paroled before others. I told them that when I got out I would try hard to get others released. I was released at Santa Fe.

Q: Were you there 2 years?

A: Yes, full 24 months. Since around that time the Justice Dept. began to think that Japanese did not spy or did anything wrong, so after 2 or 3 months they started to release Japanese one after another. I was lucky. After I was freed, I went to Minidoka, Idaho where my family was.

Q: What happened to your wife and children?

A: They were at Minidoka, Idaho. One of our sons, George volunteered for the Army and went to Italy. He lost his left leg and still wears an artificial leg. He works at Company in Houston, Texas now. He is in a good position, and he also receives money from the government. Last year he sent me an plane ticket, so I visited him at Christmas time.

Q: Where did you go from the jail?

A: I went to Montana. Half year later I was sent to Roseberg near Mexican boarder.

Q: How was the life in the internment camp?

A: It was pretty good, but when we went to Roseberg near Mexican boarder, they did not treat us well there. The food was not good, and we were told to go out and grow our food. They did not give us any extra pairs of shoes or pants. We had only one pair of shoes and pants. Fortunately, I had a copy of Geneva treaty on the treatment of war prisoners. As I was elected the governor of the camp, I took the copy of Geneva treaty to the commander and asked him to study it. He became angry and told me that he did not have to do so.

When I came back and held a meeting the people got angry and decided to go on a strike. Then late Mr. Yaezuru Sugimatsu who used to be the director of Japanese school in Los Angeles, Mr. Sotaro Kawabe from Alaska and myself were put in a jail within the internment camp. Mr. Chusaburo Ito who was a director of the Buddhist church told me to cancel the strike because I might be killed if we did such a thing. I told him that I would think it over that night. I was scared that night, but I prayed all night and decided to go on strike even if I get killed for 1,000 inmates.

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When the commander reported the strike to the State Department, an officer from the State Department and the Spanish consul general came to the camp and held a hearing for 2 days. They told us that the camp was treating us according to the Geneva Treaty, and posted copies of the treaty in the commander's office and the governor's office. A week later the commander was changed. The new commander told me that the former commander was a good man, but he did not know anything about the regulations. He was an old man who was stationed in Philippines for a long time. The new commander was a lawyer. He was a major in the World War I, but he was promoted to colonel and was sent to the internment camp in Roseburg. He told me what there won't be any more trouble.

I was lucky, for at one time I thought I was going to get killed. I wonder why I was elected governor of 1,000 inmates. There were 4 companies of 250 people each with one mayor over them. All 1,000 people were leaders from various places, and there were no women or children. I added in my testimony today that I am weak alone, but I am strong because Jesus is with me.

Q: Did you work in the internment camp?

A: No, they gave us spending money, but we didn't have much work to do.

Q: What did you do all day?

A: Most people did nothing, just read books, played go or shogi and laid around. They classified us as the aged, the sick and the able people. Those who could work cooked, cleaned, and washed clothes. The cause of the trouble was that they told us to go out and farm without giving us extra shoes or pants. In Geneva Treaty it is stated that they should pay minimum wages to the prisoner and supply necessary equipment such as shoes and pants for the labor. In 1942 they did not know they were going to win the war, so they told us to grow our own vegetables. That was the cause of the trouble, but it turned out all right.

Q: What was your hobby?

A: I didn't have many hobbies, just reading books and writing poems. My cousin who doesn't like said that going to church is my hobby.

Q: Do you remember your poem that won in the New Year poetry party ?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Will you please recite it?

A: Yakumo tatsu

Izumo o idete gojunen

Rainier no kumo ni waku ware no mune

Fifty years have gone by
Since I left my home in Izumo
My heart swells up when I see clouds on Mt Rainier
My poem was one of 15 which were selected from 20,000 poems.

Q: What year was that?

A: It was in 1958.

Q: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, did you think Japanese had to evacuate?

A: No, I didn't. I was the president of the Japanese Association, so I thought we could not help it if they take me and the vice-president and the secretary away as spies as it was war, but I thought they would leave wives and children home to take care of business. When I was elected the governor of the camp I said, "Let us sacrifice ourselves since this is a war. The families have to get along without their fathers or brothers." Then the evacuation order was out. We were angry saying, "There is no sense sacrificing ourselves." They said we were spies. One thousand inmates of the camp were all leaders from everywhere including Alaska and Hawaii, so they had a difficult time controlling us. Looking back, I think it was God's will that Japan lost the war. I don't know what would have happened if Japan had won the war. Now Japan has become comparable to America.

Q: What happened to your business when the evacuation started?

A: We closed the restaurant, but we did not have time to sell it, so my wife and children left it alone. We paid the rent, but the owner of the store took it. Our restaurant was not the only one. People who had hotels were taken away, too. Some people who had asked the white people to take care of their stores were all right, but some found nothing left when they came back. It was the war, so we could not help it. We should not have war for any reason.

Side 3 Q: Were you happy when you were released from the internment camp and were transferred to Minidoka?

A: Yes, I was happy because I was freed, but I had to report to the agency as I was a parolee. When I went to Minidoka, I was asked to be a chairman of the council. I found out that I could be a vice chairman but could not be a chairman as I was a parolee. So I became a vice-chairman.

Q: How long did you stay in Minidoka?

A: Two years.

Q: Did you work there?

A: Yes, I did. I worked as a rationer for the messhalls. I rationed food to different messhalls. They paid me \$19 a month. Regualr pay was \$16, and \$19 was for professional jobs.

Q: What kind of thing that happened in the camp do you remember?

A: Minidoka was very peaceful compared to Tule Lake. People from Washington and Oregon were there. There were some people who complained, but on the whole it was good. There was not enough sugar. Some mess halls asked if there was some mistake in sugar ration, as it is too little. I told them that I distribute sugar according to the number of people, so I could not do anything about it. At one time I went to the mess hall with the chief of the food department, and found out that cooks were making manju (bean-jam buns) with sugar. There are dishonest people anywhere.

One Buddhist priest came to me and asked me to give him a large quantity of food as he was going to hold a celebration ^{anniversary} of the [] of Kobo Daishi's birthday. I told him that I could not give him so much food without the authorization from the commander of the camp, and it might cause some problem if I did that. Then he said, "Can you give me as much as you can?" I said, "I will think it over." I talked with some people and gave him a small quantity of food. Later I heard that he had a bad reputation of asking people for donation, so people told me not to give him any more if he asked again. When I came back from the camp I heard that he had a bad reputation in Portland, too. I think people do not change no matter where they go.

Q: Didn't most number of boys go to 442nd from Minidoka?

A: That's what I hear. It was good that there was not much opposition in the camp. In some camps there were people who opposed to Niseis going to war.

Q: Were you questioned about the Niseis going to war?

A: No, I wasn't.

Q: Were any people questioned about the loyalty?

A: They questioned us at Missoula, Montana which was a detention station. From there some people were sent back, and some were sent to internment camps as war prisoners. After they decided to send me to an internment camp, I was taken to Roseburg by a train which had the shades pulled over the windows. They served us chicken dinner, so we thought they might treat us before ~~we~~ ^{they} kill us. Later they told us that we were under the jurisdiction of the Justice Department before, but after we got on board the train we were under the military jurisdiction. For half a year we did not eat good at Missoula, Montana, but ^{that} after ~~the~~ Army fed us well.

Q: How did you feel when you were questioned?

A: As I am a Christian I had to think fairly. America might have done wrong, but Japan was bad to China and Korea, too, so it could not be helped.

Q: What other questions did they ask?

A: They asked if we would be loyal to America or to Japan. That was a funny question because they interned us on the assumption that we were for Japan. A foolish question was that if we thought Emperor was a god. England has a queen. Japan has 2,000 years history, so it does not work if a president rule the nation. As it was during the wartime they asked absurd questions.

Q: Do you have any other recollections of Minidoka?

A: Dr. Hachiro Iwasa, former president of Doshisha University came to Minidoka, so I took him around to visit the blocks. Before that time, the government told us to go back to Seattle, but people did not want to go back there. When Dr. Iwasa came I took him to each block, and he told people to go home as the war was almost over. Some people said even I was on American side. The commander of the camp told me to go to Seattle with the vice-commander and report to the people what I saw in Seattle. I came to Seattle with the vice-commander and stayed there for 2 weeks. At that time Mr. Denning whom I knew at church happened to be the mayor of Seattle. He told me to bring everybody home, and he will help as much as he could. Only he could not promise housing as there was a shortage. He made living quarters for us in churches and schools, and greeted us warmly. I found a friend indeed. He is a fine man.

He went to Japan several times after the war. The other day the Pacific Mayors' Conference was held in Seattle. It was mayor Denning and mayor Yasui of Tokyo who organized the Pacific Mayors' Conference, and it is held every two years between Japan and America.

After I went back to the camp I went around each block telling them that it was safe to go back to Seattle. The truth is, it was not safe yet. Some barbers refused to give Japanese haircuts, or some news vendors would not sell newspapers. The war was still going on when they told us to leave, so it was difficult to convince everybody to leave, but we finally left Minidoka without any trouble.

Q: When did you come back?

A: Last part of September, 1945.

Q: Did people leave there before then?

A: Yes, they did. Japanese walked on difficult paths. To think about it, it might have been dangerous if we stayed here.

Q: Was the situation quieted down when you came back in September, or was it still bad?

A: It was still bad. After I came back, single people were put in St Peter's Church and they slept on Army cots. There was no place to live. A teacher of the Japanese school could not live in his own house for 6 months, so he lived in the school.

There were 30 classrooms in the school. A family with 8 children stayed in a large room. When they put 10 beds there was no space left. There were two such big families. Thirty families lived in the Japanese school. The Methodist church was for couples with no children. The luggages were piled up in the gymnasium of our Presbyterian church, so we could not hold Sunday School class there. The situation got better with the time. Japan got better, and Japanese in America got better. A man's life is like that. There are good time and bad time,

Q: Did you start the business again?

A: No. Around that time our youngest son George came home from the war with an artificial leg, and went back to college. I used to manage a restaurant, but I could not make money as I was not a cook, and since our children were on their own I quit the business and took care of Japanese who came back from the camp. On the side, I collected R.A.R.A. material and asked women's groups of churches to wash them, and had the shippers ship them. We sent 330 tons in 7 years. The Nikkeijin Kai was reopened in 1949.

Q: What did you do for your income?

A: Before the parsonage of the church was built I lived in the apartment on the second floor of the church, as I did not have to pay the rent. I just bought some food from the neighborhood grocery store. I received a small allowance from the office, That is why the Niseis called me the "public servant."

Q; How old were you when you came back?

A: I was 56 years old. Since then I have been doing the public service. After the church was moved, my son bought a house so I lived with him. After he moved to Houston, Texas, I have been living with my niece and her husband. I do not need much money. God takes care of me.

Q: Doesn't the president of the Nikkeijin Kai get paid?

A: No, he doesn't. I get \$150 as office allowance, which pays for my lunch.

Q: What did your wife do after you came back?

A: She died in 1959.

Q: What did she do till then?

A: She taught flower arrangement and tea ceremony. None of the teachers of flower arrangement in Seattle could speak English. As she could speak English she had many white students. She taught Urasenge style tea ceremony.

Q: Don't you miss your wife?

A: Yes, but it can't be helped. God gives and God takes away. It is very important to be a Christian at such a time, otherwise there will be a big empty hole and you cannot do anything. At such time we can bear it if we know it is God's will. Everybody will experience the loss of parents, wife or children once in his lifetime.

Q: Are you the one who established an organization of the parents of 442 boys who were killed in action?

A: No, I am not. The "Gold Star" boys were killed in action, but my son George was wounded in action.

Q: As an Issei, what kind of thing do you want to teach young people?

A: I ^{an} want them to learn good points of Japanese culture and custom. In order to do so, I think they should learn Japanese language. Lately J.A.C.L. and veterans committee are going to Japan. My granddaughter is studying at Waseda University and teaching English at night. She rents an apartment and manage to make a living there. The number of Sanseis interested in learning about Japan is increasing.

T: It is important for a Sansei to support oneself as a Japanese.

M: I think so, too. Her father is a treasurer of the Japanese School. About 150 Sanseis and Yonseis come to the school. The Japanese Language School is under the Nikkeijin Kai.

Q: Are you the principal of the Japanese Language School?

A: No, there is no principal now. Mr. Matsushita was the principal for a long time but he is old now, so Mrs. Yasuko Shigake who has been working under Mr. Matsushita for 15 years is now the dean of the school.

Q: Did the Nikkeijin Kai manage the Japanese Language School as a board?

A: It was a separate organization. It was called the Japanese Language School Board, but we took care of it. On Saturdays ^{Otaki} Mr. ~~Oto~~ and Mr. Takeyama, also a deacon of the Presbyterian Church go there and help the school by collecting tuituion and enrollment fee. They are volunteers. I think that is why the community in Seattle is so cooperative. It may not work out well if we receive salary. It seems that things are getting better everywhere. The Hinode Tower in San Francisco is managed by Shukyo Renmei.

Q: Isn't there a large board and care home in Seattle?

A: It is the Keiro Nursing Home which was built last year. The Kawabe House is built by the government subsidy. Sanseis are volunteering their services.

Q: Have you been working without pay since after the war?

A: Yes. God provides. If I am not living with my niece, and I have to rent an apartment I need money, so I have to work or the committee has to support me. We have to sacrifice ourselves.

Q: What relationship is your niece?

A: She is my sister's daughter. I took care of her like my own daughter. She got married, but her husband is a good man, and he does not mind me staying with them. They have 2 daughters, who call me "Ojii chan" (grandpa). Sometimes I buy Japanese food to take home, but they tell me not to buy them.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time for you?

A: It was during the Depression when I was operating a restaurant. I could not ask my friend to lend me some money. It would have been easier if I sold the liquor, but I didn't, so it was hard to make the ends meet.

We can get things done because the Japanese community cooperates with the Nikkeijin Kai. One example is, that two years ago Hokubei Hochi, the only one Japanese newspaper in the Northwest was going to close as it had financial difficulties. If they did, there was no way of knowing the news of the Japanese community in the Northwest. It had to move its office. The Nikkeijin Kai decided to help, and appealed to the community to raise \$20,000 needed to move the newspaper office. The Nikkeijin Kai was to manage the money. Thanks to their help about \$20,000 was collected, and the newspaper office was moved without spending any moeny. When the Nikkeijin Kai asks, the community cooperates. Therefore the president of the newspaper is grateful to Nikkeijin Kai. It is the same with the church. We need cooperation within the church.